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Judges 3

(2020)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Judges 3

Topics.

- Philistines, Canaanites, Sidonians and Hivites dwell in the land.
- Israel took foreign daughters for wives, and served Baals and Asheroth.
- Cushan-rishathaim the king of Mesopotamia ruled Israel eight years.
- The LORD raises up Othniel to deliver Israel from Cushan-rishathaim.
- Othniel defeated Cushan-rishathaim, and the land had rest forty-years.
- Othniel died and Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
- Israel serves Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.
- The LORD raises up Ehud a left-handed man to deliver Israel.
- Ehud thrusts a dagger into Egon's belly and he dies.
- Israel killed 10,000 of the Moabites and had rest for eighty years.
- Shamgar kills 600 Philistines with an ox-goad, and saved Israel.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The Israelites forgot the LORD, and worshipped false gods, so the LORD removed His protection and blessings from them, which resulted in them being oppressed by their enemies and crying to the LORD for deliverance. In answer to their prayer the LORD raised up twelve Judges to deliver them, but not Judges as we think of Judges today or preachers of righteousness, but rather military leaders and fighters, that led Israel to triumph over their enemies and delivered them from their wicked behaviour. Most suppose that Samuel (considered by some to be the last Judge) wrote some parts of the book, while other parts were written at a later time by someone of his generation or a later generation. The primary purpose of the Judges is best articulated in the following words, "The LORD raised up Judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. (Judges 2:16). For an overview of the entire book see the title:

- Overview of the Book of Judges (at the beginning of the index).

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, but when he died, another generation arose after him who served the Baals and abandoned the LORD. The Angel of the LORD told Israel He will no longer drive the Canaanites out, for the hand of the LORD was against Israel for harm. Israel repents. The chapter ends with the words, the LORD raised up judges, who saved Israel from their enemies, but whenever the judge died, Israel turned back to other gods, so the LORD no longer drove out any nation that Joshua had left.

THE LORD LEAVES NATIONS TO TEST ISRAEL

JUDGES 3:1-2

- **Judges 3:1-2:** Now these are the nations that the LORD left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. ² It was only in order that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, to teach war to those who had not known it before.

The words “even as many of Israel” show that the generation in view is the generation immediately after the close of the wars with the Canaanites, spoken of in the following verses:

- And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. (Judges 2:10).
- A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years. (Joshua 23:1).

All in Israel who had not experienced war: again, this expression clearly implies that the focus is the generation after Joshua who were born after the conclusion of the wars (i.e., after Joshua’s death), or were infants during the wars, and therefore had no experience of them, nor of God’s extraordinary power and miraculous works manifested during them.

Israel might teach war to those who had not known war: (v2) this carries the following two ideas:

1. God left these nations among them, so that those who had not experience war would come to know its horrors and the sad effects of it.
2. God left the Canaanite nations among them, so they would learn what it is to go to war without the Angel of the LORD going before them, which is why they would have to learn the skills of war, for they would be fighting them without God on their side.
3. By experiencing war, they would learn that luxury, prosperity and worldly pleasures are temporary, false gods cannot save them and that they would never be safe or secure without God.

OVERVIEW: The LORD used the nations remaining in the land to try the faithfulness of Israel. Temptations and trials uncover and expose the wickedness of the heart and magnify and strengthen God’s grace daily lavished upon Christian believers. All Christians must live in this world, but they are not of it, nor should they conform to it. This evidences the difference between faithful followers of Christ and those who simply give the Lord lip service. Friendship of the world is far more dangerous than their enemies, for enemies can only kill the body, but friendship of the world has robbed many from eternal life.

NOTE: not having friendship with the world, does not refer to functioning in the world or about commerce or establishing business or even having acquaintance or unbelieving friends, rather it’s about loving the sinful things of the world and craving after the luxuries and pleasure of the world, rather than God, it’s about holding onto things or people of the world that hinder our faith, led us into sin or turn us away from God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

SNAPSHOT: the book of Judges evidences the good influence a theocracy had upon the people of Israel when it was headed by a godly leader.

FIVE NATIONS TO TEST ISRAEL

JUDGES 3:3-4

- **Judges 3:3-4:** These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-

hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. ⁴ They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

The chapter proceeds now to itemise the specific nations the LORD left in the land of Canaan to prove Israel. This was the unique purpose of these nations remaining in the land. The five lords of the Philistines were:

1. Gaza
2. Ashdod
3. Askelon
4. Gath
5. Ekron

Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron, had been taken from them by Judah, since the death of Joshua.

- Judah also captured Gaza with its territory, and Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. (Judges 1:18)

But the Philistines soon recovered them again, perhaps with the help of the other two. The Philistines were a people originally of Egypt, but came from there and settled in these parts as early as in the times of Abraham, and were very troublesome neighbours to the Israelites in later times.

All the Canaanites: this could embrace a particular tribe or nation in the land of Canaan which was located by the sea, and the coast of Jordan (Num. 13:29), or the general name for the seven nations throughout various parts of the land of Canaan.

The Sidonians: refers to the inhabitants of the famous city of Sidon, which had its name from the firstborn of Canaan (Gen. 10:15). They maintained their complete independence to the last.

The Hivites: lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath (Judges 3:3). In (Josh. 11:3) it is stated they live under Mount Hermon in the land of Mizpah. Mizpeh has been identified with "el-Mutalleh," which also means "the look-out" or "watch-tower."

It is supposed that the name Hivite means "midlanders," or "villagers." They lived in a circular encampment or village (as many still do to this day in northern Syria) with enclosures for cattle in the centre.

Mount Baal-hermon: is in northern Israel or southern Lebanon, perhaps on Mount Hermon, its boundaries are uncertain.

Lebo-hamath: there is some disagreement exactly where Lebo-hamath lies, but (Num. 34:8) says it is on the northern border between Mount Hor near the Mediterranean and Zedad near the Syrian desert.

Nations left to prove Israel: (v3) these nations of Canaan were left, to test Israel's devotion and faithfulness to the Lord their God, would they choose to follow the commandments, of the LORD, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses, especially those that concerned the destruction of the Canaanites, their altars, and their idols.

- When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you. (Deut. 7:1).

Or would they choose to follow the idols and pagan religion of the remaining nations.

JUDGES 3:5-7

- **Judges 3:5-7:** So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁶ And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods. ⁷ And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth (Baalim and the groves in KJV).

They took their daughters: (v6) the Israelites intermarried with the inhabitants of the land, contrary to the express command of God:

- You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, (Deut. 7:3).

This beginning of intermarriages shows that we are now a generation removed from the days of Joshua. Mixed marriages confounded their families, debased their blood, mingled the holy race with the peoples around them and ensnared the leaders the officials and the common people into idolatry, as the rest of this book shows. This was the natural consequence of their intermarriages, which the LORD foresaw, and therefore strongly forbid them to enter into such marriages.

- You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. (Deut. 7:3-4).

Israel served the Baals (Baalim in KJV): (v7) the name Baal means "owner" or "lord," it was a chief male god of the Canaanites, in the plural it is Baalim. Each locality had its own special Baal often summed up under the name of Baalim, or lords. Their statues were commonly built on high places and their worshippers offered them burnt offerings. (Jer. 19:5). The following verses are only a few that show Israel often forsook the LORD and followed Baals.

- The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. (Judges 2:11).
- The people of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals." (Judges 10:10).
- He (Elijah) answered (Ahab), "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. (1 Kings 18:18).
- In that day, declares the LORD, you (Israel) will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal. (Hosea 2:16).

Israel served the Asheroth (groves in KJV): (v7) a grove when used in the Bible refers to a small group of trees, suitable for shade with minimal or no undergrowth, where pagan temples were built and idols were worshipped. Asheroth is also called Asherim and refers to wooden images of the nature-goddess. The following verses are only a few that show Israel often forsook the LORD and followed Asheroth/Asherim.

- You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim. (Exodus 34:13).
- You shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire. (Deut. 7:5)
- You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. (Deut. 12:3).

- They also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree. (1 Kings 14:23).

Forgot the LORD their God: (v7) this does not mean that they had no memory of Him, but that they set Him aside to worship idols and pagan gods.

GOD ANGER IS KINDLED ANGAINT ISRAEL

JUDGES 3:8

- **Judges 3:8:** Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

Chushan-Rishathaim: (v8) means, "the times of servitude," in contrast to, "the times of rest" (i.e., when the Judges ruled). The word, Chushan means "the wicked and carries the idea of double wickedness and is an expression of hatred. Probably given to him because of his cruel, irreverent and ungodly character. Some call him king of Assyria, and give him the name of Chusarthum making his whole name Chushanrishathaim while others take Rishathaim to be a description that implies, Cushan the wicked king of Syria. Since the word is of two parts and signifies two wickedness's, it is reasoned that the name refers to two wicked things, firstly, what Syria did to Israel by Balaam the Syrian, and secondly, the fact this Cushan held Israel in bondage for eight years.

Mesopotamia: (v8) was the seat of Nimrod's kingdom, and Cush was the father of Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12). It is the part of Syria which lay between two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is very likely no one would have thought that Israel's trouble would come from this country, because it was such a great distance from Israel, but it does show so much the more that the hand of God was in it.

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He sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim: (v8) meaning God delivered Israel into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim the king of Mesopotamia, which is, Syria, between the river Tigris and Euphrates river. This means the Syrians were the first enemies to oppressed Israel, perhaps, from hatred, or maybe a desire to enlarge their dominions. They came over the Euphrates river and invaded Israel, after which they kept them in subjection and oppression eight years, by putting them to labour and the payment of yearly taxes.

THE LORD RAISES UP OTHNIEL

JUDGES 3:9-10

- **Judges 3:9-10:** But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

The people of Israel cried out to the LORD: (v9) affliction makes those who know God, and even those who before would scarcely speak to Him, cry out to the LORD of heaven. After eight years of oppression and paying taxes to the king of Syria, Israel fervently prays before God, from a humble and repentant heart, confessing their sins and errors, and cry for deliverance. God seeing their oppressions and their prayer sets upon them His mercy and raises up a deliverer.

In the book of Nehemiah, we read:

- You gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. (Nehemiah 9:27).

Othniel: means "lion of God." He was already distinguished as a man of courage and great and successful warrior during Joshua's lifetime.

- And Caleb said, "Whoever strikes Kiriath-sepher and captures it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife." ¹⁷ And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it. And he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. (Joshua 15:16-17).

His military skill and experience qualified him for setting Israel free from Syrian oppression and his strong faith and courage would have gained him the full confidence of his countrymen in his ability as a leader.

The statement, "the LORD raised up a deliverer," means the LORD raised up a man qualified for the work, which is a principal of God's calling, for He would never raise up a man who had no experience in warfare or in leadership to led others into such a dangerous and life-threatening environment. To do such a thing would be like calling someone who has absolutely no knowledge of music to be the music leader in a church, such a thing would be foolishness.

The Spirit of the LORD was upon him: (v10) stirring him up to this great undertaking, and providing him with extraordinary inspiration and wisdom and great authority and influence.

He judged Israel: meaning he saw their suffering, their oppression, their weeping and sincere and humble prayer, and was moved to bring about their deliverance. It could be said, "upon seeing their repentance before the LORD he judged Israel worthy to risk his life for," which is what he did, he put his life on the line for the sake of the people, and in faith, went to war and the LORD gave him victory over Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia so that Israel had forty years of rest. (We are given no further account of this war).

The land had rest forty years: (v10) Othniel undertook the following difficult tasks:

- Governing and reforming the nation.
- Establishing God's laws and abolishing idolatry, in the land.
- Gathering together an army of choice warriors to expel the remaining foreign oppressors.

Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died: (v10) after Othniel death the tribe of Judah fades into the background until the days of David.

SNAP SHOT: the life of Othniel shines a brilliant spotlight upon the enormous effect and powerful influence one good man of courage devoted and faithful to God can have upon the masses, whether it is in a nation or in a church.

ISRAEL DID EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD

JUDGES 3:12-14

- **Judges 3:12-13:** And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD. ¹³ He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites, and went and defeated Israel. And they took possession of the city of palms. ¹⁴ And the people of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

Israel again did what was evil: (v12), soon after the death of Othniel, the people turned to their old corrupt ways. This is the sad story of the Israelites during the entire time of the judges. The Judge would free them from oppression and reform their religion and purify them from idolatry, and very soon after he died, they turned back to their old corrupt wicked ways. Every period of time during the entire history of the Judges, ushered in a time of faithfulness and peace, followed by the extreme opposite. This cycle continues to the last Judge that God raised up. This evidences the great influence one good person in authority can have over a nation or multitude of people.

The LORD strengthened Eglon, king of Moab: (v12), by putting it into his heart to invade Israel and giving him courage, and power, and success against them. In the same way that God raised up deliverers for Israel, when they became repentant, likewise he raised up enemies against them when they turned to their old corrupt ways. It was Eglon, the reigning monarch the king of Moab ambition to recover the vast portion of his ancient territory that was presently possessed by the Israelites.

He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites: (v13) the children of Ammon were closely allied with the Moabites by affinities of race and character.

- The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day.³⁸ The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day. (Genesis 19:37-38).

The children of the Amalekites embrace the wild desert clans, which are united under the name of Amalek. From the very beginning they were constant and bitter enemies of the Israelites. The LORD inclined Eglon the king of Moab to gather the children of Ammon and Amalek to him and enter into a confederacy to go to war against Israel.

They took possession of the city of palms: (v13) the city of palms, refers to Jericho:

- The Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. (Deuteronomy 34:3).

But not the city that was demolished, but the territory belonging to it. Here Eglon set up his camp for the following reasons:

- The fertility of the soil and its nearness to the way over the river Jordan, which was suitably widespread for the amalgamation of Eglon's own armies, which were on both sides of the Jordan river.
- Its location would prevent the tribes of Israel in Canaan unifying with their tribes beyond the Jordan river.
- It would secure Eglon's return to his own country.

Eighteen years: (v14) the previous Syrian servitude lasted eight years, while the Moabite oppression lasted eighteen years.

THE LORD RAISES UP EHUD

JUDGES 3:15-22

- **Judges 3:15-22:** Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute (a present in KJV) by him to Eglon the king of Moab.¹⁶ And Ehud made for himself a sword (dagger in KJV) with two edges, a cubit in length, and he bound it on his right thigh under his clothes.¹⁷ And he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.¹⁸ And when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who carried the tribute.¹⁹ But he himself turned back at

the idols near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he commanded, "Silence." And all his attendants went out from his presence.²⁰ And Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." And he arose from his seat.²¹ And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.²² And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not pull the sword out of his belly; and the dung (dirt in KJV) came out.

Here in the first verse, we are told that Ehud was the son of Gera, however, in the following verse Gera is said to be a son of Benjamin.

- The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. (Gen. 46:21).

And in Chronicles he is said to be a son of Bela.

- Bela had sons: Addar, Gera, Abihud. (1 Chron. 8:3).

This should not surprise anyone because the name Gera was hereditary in the tribe of Benjamin as the following verse show.

- Benjamin fathered Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah the third,² Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth.³ And Bela had sons: Addar, Gera, Abihud,⁴ Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah,⁵ Gera, Shephuphan, and Hiram.⁶ These are the sons of Ehud (they were heads of fathers' houses of the inhabitants of Geba, and they were carried into exile to Manahath):⁷ Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera, that is, Heglaim, who fathered Uzza and Ahihud. (1 Chron. 8:1-7).

Added to this the Jews often omit steps in their genealogies which means that we can never be sure whether "son" refers to a son or descendant, which means all we can say with absolute certainty is that Ehud was a son or descendant of Gera. The tribe of Benjamin inhabited the territory of Jericho, which was the land in which Eglon the king of Moab had set up his court, which means the people of Benjamin were most likely more oppressed and afflicted than any of the other tribes. This may be one of the reasons the LORD stirred up a deliverer from this tribe.

Left-handed: according to various scholars this could mean one of the following three things:

1. He had a defect in his right hand or it was deformed in some way, that may have been caused by some accident, perhaps in battle.
2. He naturally used his left hand, rather than his right hand.
3. He could use both his left and right hands equally well as the following highly skilled warriors could.
 - They were bowmen and could shoot arrows and sling stones with either the right or the left hand; they were Benjaminites, Saul's kinsmen. (1 Chronicles 12:2).

Supporting this idea is the fact that the mention of being left-handed was seen as a mark of a man's skill and courage in battle.

- Among all these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. (Judges 20:16).
4. It is perhaps mentioned here in the story, since it would give Ehud an unexpected deceptive advantage to the deadly blow that he killed Eglon with.

Israel sent tribute (present in KJV) by Ehud to Eglon: (v16), Israel sent Ehud to give the tribute/present to Eglon, perhaps for one of the following three reasons:

1. He was the chief of the tribe, and the king of Moab would not receive anyone of a lesser status.

2. He was familiar with the king.
3. He had told Israel of his deceptive plan and plot to kill Eglon.

It is most likely he was sent for all of three of these reasons. This present/gift could refer to one of the following three things:

1. A yearly tax that had been imposed upon the Benjamites, which according to Eastern tradition would be delivered and received with ostentatious ceremony.
2. A voluntary present that they sent with the hope it would appease the king's mind and make him more favourable to them.
3. A voluntary present they sent with Ehud to gain close access to the king so he could kill him.

Whether it was a yearly tax or a lavish gift, matters little to the story, because it achieved its purpose, for it appeased the king's mind and made him more favourable to Ehud, and allowed Ehud to gain close access to the king so he could kill him. (Judges 3:21-22).

Ehud dwelt in the territory of Jericho, which is where Eglon had set up his camp. The most likely scenario is that it was a pre-planned plot by Ehud to secretly kill Moab's king. It seems that by sending regular gifts and presents Ehud had become very familiar with Eglon, supporting this idea is the fact Eglon told his guards to leave his chamber so he could be alone with Ehud, which means Eglon never considered his life was in danger or that Ehud would do him any harm. It appears that the present/gift was considerably large, because Ehud had people with him to carry it (v18), which would make sense since it was a gift for a king.

Ehud made for himself a sword (dagger in KJV) with two edges: (v16), so it could cut in both directions, this two-edged sword was a cubit long, which is about half a metre, which would guarantee the death of a fat man. Naturally no Israelite visiting the king of their enemy would be permitted to wear a weapon, so it was also a suitable length to conceal on his thigh, under his clothes.

Ehud finished presenting the present to Eglon: (v18), the picture here is of Ehud and the people standing with the king and his guards, while they present the king with their gift. Then Ehud and those with him leave, they get as far as some well-known landmark of idols at Gilgal, which was in the immediate neighbourhood of Jericho where Eglon had set up his court at this time. Ehud returns by himself and tells the king he has a secret message from God for him. The king being won over by the gift/present, commands all his attendants to leave them alone. Now we see that the gift must have been something of great value, for after receiving it the king trusted Ehud, so much that he allowed himself to be alone with him. This was clearly Ehud's plan from the beginning. Ehud seizes the moment and thrusts his sword into Eglon's belly.

The fat closed over the blade: (v22) the thrust of the blade was so strong and violent that even the handle of it went into Eglon's belly and being an excessive fat man, the fat closed over it. The tremendous thrust of the blow shows the absolute determination of Ehud to succeed in his mission.

The dung (dirt in KJV) came out: (v22) the meaning of the word dung here is uncertain, because the Hebrew word rendered "dirt" only occurs here. However, most agree that it signifies the excrements, and means that his excrements spued out, which often happens when a person dies either a natural or violent death.

- **Judges 3:23-25:** Then Ehud went out into the porch and closed the doors of the roof chamber behind him and locked them. ²⁴ When he had gone, the servants came, and when they saw that the doors of the roof chamber were locked, they thought, “Surely he is relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber.” ²⁵ And they waited till they were embarrassed. But when he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber, they took the key and opened them, and there lay their lord dead on the floor.

This is the first time we read of a key. The key signifies an instrument to open something with, keys of the ancients were different from our keys today, they were somewhat like a bar of wood or wooden instrument, that they put in through a hole in the door, and with it could lift up the latch within the room or draw back a bolt, and in this way could lock or unlock the door from the inside or outside.

Another key: it was not unusual in the courts of kings for princes, officers and guards to be intrusted with keys to rooms in the royal court.

Tarried till they were ashamed: (25) not conceiving what could cause the king to sleep so much longer than usual, the guards were in great bewilderment, not knowing what to say or think and no doubt afraid that they would either disturb him, or be guilty of neglect toward him.

Lay their lord dead on the floor: (25) they eventually unlock the door and enter the room and to their horror see their king dead on the floor. Ehuds calm unhurried and successful escape, and the fact he brought about Eglons death without a shout or scream for help, shine a light upon Ehuds confidence and courage and that he had meticulously and carefully planned this daring act out.

EHUD ESCAPES

JUDGES 3:26-28

- **Judges 3:26-28:** Ehud escaped while they delayed, and he passed beyond the idols and escaped to Seirah. ²⁷ When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was their leader. ²⁸ And he said to them, “Follow after me, for the LORD has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand.” So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites and did not allow anyone to pass over.

Escaped to Seirath: (v26) means woody, it probably refers to a woodland or forest that bordered on the cultivated plain near Gilgal, and extended into the mountain or hill country of Ephraim. While the servants of the king of Moab waited before opening the door and seeing their dead king on the floor, Ehud made his escape. Once he had got beyond the frontier of Gilgal, into the district of Ephraim, he was safe from pursuit. Following are two reasons he may not have returned to Gilgal:

1. He would know that Gilgal would be the first place the Moabites would seek after him.
2. He intended to gather all the powerful and strong forces of the tribes of Ephraim together to invade and destroy the Moabites.

He blew a trumpet: (v27) once Ehud was safe from pursuit, he collected a strong force of Ephraimites and probably the Benjamites bordering them. No doubt he had sent messengers throughout the land to tell the people to prepare for war. Since one trumpet would not be heard by all people in the land, the common system was for the Captain of the army to have his trumpeter blow his trumpet, and as soon as other trumpeters further away heard its sound, they would blow their trumpet, and in this way the sound of the trumpet was heard throughout the land. Israel had a different trumpet sound for war, for national gatherings and gatherings of festivals and praise etc.

Took the fords of Jordan: referring to those areas where the river Jordan could be crossed.

- So the men pursued after them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. And the gate was shut as soon as the pursuers had gone out. (Joshua 2:7).

This was a matter of extreme importance for Israel's success in this battle, because there were only a few fords where they could cross the river and they were some distant apart from each other. Securing these fords meant that the Moabites on this side of the river could not escape and the Moabites and Canaanites on the other side could not cross over to aid the Moabites against the armies of Israel.

ISRAEL LAND HAD REST FOR EIGHTY YEARS

JUDGES 3:29-31

- **Judges 3:29-31:** And they killed at that time about 10,000 of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men; not a man escaped.³⁰ So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.³¹ After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed 600 of the Philistines with an oxgoad, and he also saved Israel.

Ehud, with his armies attacked the Moabites and slew ten thousand of their most valiant men, which utterly broke the power of Moab, and freed the Israelites from the yoke of the Moabite nation. The land of Moab itself was not subdued and brought into subjection to the Israelites; but the Moabites were so weakened by this battle, that they could not hold the Israelites under their power any longer. Ehud rescued the eastern part of Israel from a state of humiliating subordination and dishonourable submission to an idolatrous nation.

The land had rest for eighty years: (v30), not the entire land of Israel, but the eastern part of it, because they had now shaken off Moab's dominion.

At various times there were Judges ruling at the same time in different parts of the land, some parts were at rest while there was war in another part. At this time the eastern part of the land had rest. But the last verse of this chapter tells us that the western parts of Israel needed saving from the Philistines. (Judges 3:31) and in the next chapter we see that the northern parts of Israel needed saving from Jabin the king of Canaan.

SNAP SHOT: it should be said, that while Ehud's courage and readiness to sacrifice himself, if needed, for the deliverance of God's people was thoroughly noble, the murderous act by which he brought about their deliverance, cannot be used to justify such acts today. Even though it is a gross abuse of the New Testament covenant we live under today to cite Ehud's example to defend assassination of enemies of God, various ruthless men who profess Christ have in past generations defended murder by assuming that the Divine call on Ehud's life to deliver God's people sanctioned the murder of others.

But such methods of reasoning and reaching such conclusions on the interpretation of a text to justify our crimes, undermines the very principals of good Bible study and its application. When this kind of application of a text is applied, it leaves those who embrace them open to the grossest abuses of mankind, and a means to cover the most horrific and cruel offences and law-breaking. Following are just two examples:

1. When Jacques Clement asked whether a priest could kill a tyrant, he was told that, "it was not a mortal sin, but only an irregularity."
2. When Pope Paul V. heard of the murder of Henry IV. by Ravailac, he said, "The God of nations did this, because he was given over to a reprobate mind."

It has always been a principal of the devil to misquote Scripture for his purpose, and to use the lips of those who profess to teach it. A famous professor stated, "Worse than the dagger, is misquoted scripture and doctrine built from man's reasoning, for the dagger will only kill the body,

but false doctrine will kill the soul.” Acts of violence and cunning, done during the Old Testament when culture and human society commended such acts, and thought them right are very different from the same acts done in the New Testament age when consciences have been enlightened and when the law of the land has established justice systems and the law of nations give individuals security. It is right and proper to credit Ehud, with great courage, faith patriotism and passion for God’s people. But in doing so, we should not be blind to this story being used by ruthless men to justify criminal acts, that fly in the face of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is interesting to notice that amongst all those mentioned in Paul’s list of people of great faith neither Ehud nor Jael are included. (Heb. 11:32-33).

The son of Anath: (v31) nothing is mentioned in Scripture concerning Shamgar’s family or which tribe he came from, this could mean he was a son or a descendant of Anath.

After Ehud was Shamgar: (v31), he was the third judge to rise up after Ehud. He delivered Israel from oppressions they suffered from the Philistines. It appears this fight against the Philistines was local and confined to some of the western tribes. From (v31) and the following verse:

- In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the byways. (Judges 5:6).

We may conclude that Shamgar was contemporary with Jael, and that his success only procured a temporary and partial deliverance for Israel.

Shamgar killed 600 Philistines with an ox-goad: (v31) the goad (also known as a cattle prod), is a long wooden stick or rod about six to eight feet long with a strong sharp iron point or spike at the thicker end. Traditionally farmers used it to spur or guide livestock on, usually oxen, while they were pulling a plough or a cart, or while rounding up cattle. Being disarmed of swords, spears and weapons of war, such an instrument would be the next best weapon. We are given no further information concerning Shamgar than the fact he slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad.

Following are two different thoughts concerning the 600:

1. Shamgar did not slay all 600 single-handed, those who hold this view, state the writer is simply using the same type of language as the author of the following verse used:

- And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” (1 Sam. 18:7).

Obviously, Saul and David never slayed-thousands by their own hand. Though their armies are not mentioned, the author expects the reader to include them, for in Scripture it is more common to say that a leader personally did all that was done under his leadership. Added to this, they reason that if Shamgar did slay all 600 himself, then more would have been killed by others, and if they were, they would have been added or mentioned. However, the flaw in this idea is that it could be argued, the reason they are not added is because the focus is Shamgar, not those with him.

2. Shamgar killed the 600, by his own hand. Whenever Israel’s enemies had them in subjection, the universal policy was disarmament, which means they would strip those in subjection to them of all military weapons, especially weapons of steel such as swords, shields and spears.

- Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.” (1 Samuel 13:19).

This reduced the Israelites to the use of whatever was at hand. It is very probable Shamgar was following a plough being pulled by oxen or they were nearby when the Philistines made an inroad into the country, and having neither sword nor spear, he took up the ox-goad to use as his weapon. Some may feel one man could not slay 600 warriors with such a primitive weapon, but when God is on your side an ox-goad, will cause more destruction than an enemy's sword. Consider Samson, he struck down 1,000 men with the jawbone of a donkey, (Judges 15:15).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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